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## ***Preparing an Emergency Evacuation Plan***

### **THE SAFETY SUPERVISOR SHOULD:**

#### **1. Prepare a building diagram.**

- A. Survey the entire building. Obtain (or draw) floor plans identifying the exits and other pertinent features.
- B. Find out what building features are affected by the fire alarm (i.e., doors automatically close, stairwells become pressurized with fresh air, partitions slide into place, elevators are recalled to a specific location).
- C. Determine whether the fire alarm bells ring on all the floors or whether the building has "selected evacuation<sup>1</sup>."
- D. Label fire protection features on the diagram.
- E. Designate the exits to be used in each area (usually the closest exit, but possibly not if a farther exit has better built-in fire protection).

#### **2. Determine the occupancy of the building.**

- A. How many people are present during a typical day?  
*Include all people who share the use of the building (i.e., a school that holds classes in a worship facility, or a building with several businesses).*
- B. How many people are present during a typical night?
- C. Are there any people who may require assistance to evacuate due to reduced mobility, coordination, or perception?  
*Consult these individuals; they are the experts regarding their situation. Ask them what assistance they would like during an evacuation. Encourage, but do not require them to accept help.*
- D. Are there any unusual hazards in the building?

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<sup>1</sup> With selected evacuation, the fire alarm bells only ring on the fire floor, the floor above and the floor below; only employees on the floors where the bells are ringing are expected to evacuate.

### **3. Determine the method of announcing an evacuation.**

If a fire alarm system exists, the pull stations will be used.

- If a public address system exists, it can be used to announce “CODE RED” followed by the location of the emergency.
- In a small area, a distinct sound (whistle, bell, etc.) or an announcement may be used.

### **4. Assign people to the emergency evacuation team.**

These people must be familiar with the building evacuation plan, floor layouts, and the location and use of fire equipment. In some cases, the floor warden may also assume the role of the assistant warden and the searcher.

If the floor is occupied by **residential tenants** (apartments and condominiums, designate one floor warden and alternate for each floor. If commercial tenants occupy the floor, each tenant should designate one floor warden and one alternate.

#### **♦ Floor Wardens**

The floor wardens are responsible for overseeing the orderly evacuation of their suite/floor upon notification of a fire alarm. They will receive and dispatch information and instructions relating to a given emergency, oversee the evacuation of all personnel from their area if required to do so, and make sure that any person with a disability is assigned a co-worker who agrees to stay with the person with the disability. It is the duty of the floor warden to report the location of these people to the fire department when they arrive.

#### **♦ Assistant Floor Wardens**

The assistant floor wardens are responsible for ensuring that all personnel leave their offices and go to the stairwell door designed for their safety. They should listen for any new information; if questions or problems arise, they should get direction from the floor warden. They will not take any individual action without checking with their floor warden, except in an emergency.

#### **♦ Searchers**

The searchers make sure that no one has been left on the floor and that all office doors are closed to reduce the spread of fire and smoke. Be sure to check conference rooms and restrooms. Searchers should be familiar with all non-visible areas and ensure everyone is out. Searchers should also report to the floor warden when they have completed their search or if any problems exist.

#### **♦ Assistants for Those With Special Needs**

Someone should be assigned to each person who has requested help in an evacuation.

#### **♦ Alternates**

Each of the people listed above should have an alternate to cover their duties in their absence.

### **5. Familiarize the emergency evacuation team with the evacuation plan.**

Hold meetings quarterly or as necessary (prior to renovation, etc.) to update the plan.

### **6. Schedule periodic fire drills.**

These should be realistic. Existing fire alarm pull stations must be used during fire drills; this will increase the chance that someone will remember to pull the handle in an actual emergency. Remember to notify your alarm company (if applicable) and the Montgomery County Emergency Communications Center (240-777-0744) so that fire units are not sent to your location.

**7. Increase awareness of fire protection features.**

Consider contests; place a sticker beneath a fire extinguisher or a pull station handle, ask employees to find it, and give a small prize to the person who finds it first.

**8. Include fire prevention information at employee health fairs.**

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service frequently provides speakers on fire and injury prevention. For details, call the Community Safety Education Division of the Fire and Rescue Service.

**THE FLOOR WARDENS SHOULD:**

**1. Be familiar with the emergency evacuation plan.**

**2. Consult each person who may need assistance evacuating to determine a plan for that individual.**

Keep in mind that some physically challenged people will not want assistance. In such cases, the fire warden should alert the fire department to their last known location. For those who do want assistance, here are some suggestions:

- a) People who are unable to walk - If located on an upper floor, the employee may be assisted to a stairwell landing to await evacuation or further instructions by fire department personnel. It is important that the co-worker or "buddy" who is assigned to the person with the disability stay with the person until the emergency is over.
- b) People who can walk with assistance - These employees may not be able to travel to a safe area quickly. A co-worker or "buddy" may be designated to assist and accompany the person in descending the stairs in the event additional help is needed, or the individuals may choose to wait in a stairwell for fire department personnel to assist them. It is important to inform the fire department personnel of this decision. Someone should be assigned to stay with this person until the emergency is over.
- c) Visual Impairment – Those individuals with poor vision or no vision may not realize the extent or location of an emergency, and may walk into unexpected objects in paths of escape. An employee with a visual impairment can proceed down the stairs with minimal assistance from a sighted coworker. The individual may prefer to hold on to the sighted person's elbow and walk a half-step behind. Someone should follow behind to protect the employee from being pushed down in the event of crowding. It is best if someone remains with the employee until the emergency is terminated.
- d) Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing – Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals may not be able to

distinguish audible warning alarms or respond to voice communications. They may be able to see a visual alarm; if so, they should be able to evacuate with the other employees. If there is no visual alarm nearby, personal notification in the form of sign or hand gestures will be necessary. It is especially important to check in restrooms, copy rooms, and kitchens in case an alarm may not be seen from that area. To get the attention of these people, flick the room light switch on and off to convey the need to communicate.

3. Provide all staff members with a copy of the emergency evacuation plan.
4. Oversee the orderly evacuation of their suite/floor upon notification of a fire alarm.
5. Receive and dispatch information and instructions.
6. Ensure that someone is assigned to any person requiring assistance.
7. Report the location of these people to the fire department when they arrive.
8. Report to the firefighters the locations of employees needing assistance and the names and locations of employees who disregard the order to evacuate the floor.

**NOTE:** *Employees who disregard the order to evacuate are subject to a \$500 civil citation.*

#### **THE ASSISTANT FLOOR WARDENS SHOULD:**

1. Be familiar with the emergency evacuation plan.
2. Ensure that all personnel go to the exit or stairwell door designated for their safety.
3. Listen for, and relay, new information.
4. Seek direction from the floor warden if questions or problems arise.

#### **THE SEARCHERS SHOULD:**

1. Ensure that everyone has left the floor.
2. Check conference rooms, restrooms, and other common areas.
3. Close office doors to reduce the spread of fire and smoke.
4. Report to the floor warden when the search is complete.
5. Relay any problems to the floor warden.

**PERSONNEL WHO ARE NOT ASSIGNED A SPECIFIC TASK SHOULD:**

1. Become familiar with the emergency evacuation plan.
2. Note the location of fire extinguishers and fire alarm pull stations.
3. Participate in fire drills.
4. Keep fire doors closed.
5. Maintain clear hallways and exits.
6. Alert the safety supervisor of hazardous conditions.
7. Evacuate promptly during emergencies or drills.
8. Avoid elevators during an emergency.
9. Remain calm and quiet so everyone can hear instructions.
10. Not return to the building until notified that it is safe to do so.

**THE PERSON DISCOVERING THE FIRE SHOULD:**

1. Activate the fire alarm system, or give the prearranged signal.
2. Remove anyone in immediate danger.
3. Designate someone to call 911 from a safe location.
4. Attempt to extinguish the fire ONLY if it is very small and ONLY if comfortable doing so.
5. If the fire cannot be extinguished, confine the fire by closing the door.

**If you smell smoke but do not see a fire:**

1. Activate the fire alarm system, or give the prearranged signal.

**If you smell natural gas:**

1. Instruct coworkers not to operate the light switches.
2. Go to a well-ventilated, odor-free, area and then call 911.

**All fires MUST be reported to the fire department by calling 911, even if they are completely out when discovered.**

## **SAFETY SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

- ☐ Prepare a building diagram.
- ☐ Determine the occupancy of the building.
- ☐ Determine the method of announcing an evacuation.
- ☐ Assign people to the emergency evacuation team.
  - ☐ Floor Wardens
  - ☐ Assistant Floor Wardens
  - ☐ Searchers
  - ☐ Assistants for Those With Special Needs
  - ☐ Alternates
- ☐ Familiarize the emergency evacuation team with the evacuation plan.
- ☐ Schedule periodic fire drills.
- ☐ Increase awareness of fire protection features.
- ☐ Include fire prevention information at health fairs.

## **FLOOR WARDEN'S RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- ☐ Be familiar with the emergency evacuation plan.
- ☐ Consult each person who may need assistance evacuating to determine a plan for that individual.
- ☐ Provide all staff members with a copy of the emergency evacuation plan. Include: floor plan, how to telephone the fire department, and the building's name and address
- ☐ Oversee the orderly evacuation of their suite/floor upon notification of a fire alarm.
- ☐ Receive and dispatch information and instructions.
- ☐ Ensure that someone is assigned to those requiring assistance.
- ☐ Report the location of these people to the fire department when they arrive.
- ☐ Report to the firefighters the locations of employees needing assistance and the names and locations of employees who disregard the order to evacuate the floor.

## **ASSISTANT FLOOR WARDEN'S RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- ☐ Be familiar with the emergency evacuation plan.
- ☐ Ensure that all personnel go to the exit or stairwell door designated for their safety.
- ☐ Listen for, and relay, new information.
- ☐ Seek direction from the floor warden if questions or problems arise.

## **SEARCHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- ☐ Be familiar with the emergency evacuation plan.
- ☐ Ensure that everyone has left the floor.
- ☐ Check conference rooms, restrooms, and other common areas.
- ☐ Close office doors to reduce the spread of fire and smoke.
- ☐ Report to the floor warden when the search is complete.
- ☐ Relay any problems to the floor warden.

## **PERSONNEL WHO ARE NOT ASSIGNED A SPECIFIC TASK SHOULD:**

- ☐ Become familiar with the emergency evacuation plan.
- ☐ Note the location of fire extinguishers and fire alarm pull stations.
- ☐ Participate in fire drills.
- ☐ Keep fire doors closed.
- ☐ Maintain clear hallways and exits.
- ☐ Alert the safety supervisor of hazardous conditions.
- ☐ Evacuate promptly during emergencies or drills.
- ☐ Avoid elevators during an emergency.
- ☐ Remain calm and quiet so everyone can hear instructions.
- ☐ Not return to the building until notified that it is safe to do so.